

in brief

Chernobyl children

FOLLOWING the decision by Belavia Airlines to withdraw its Shannon-Minsk winter service due to reduced traffic on the route and Visa regulation changes on the Irish side, Adi Roche, executive director of the Chernobyl Children's Project has confirmed that the airline will make aircraft available for the transportation of children to and from Ireland, during the holiday season.

"This will most likely be a charter service but the Belarusian Ambassador to Ireland has told me that if the situation improves the airline will be more than willing to resume the service," said Ms Roche.

Green friendly scheme

A NEW scheme, which will provide farmers with an opportunity to produce commercial timber, while making an important contribution to combating climate change has been welcomed by Deputy Niall Collins. Referring to the Forest Environment Protection Scheme (FEPS), the deputy says this gives them an opportunity to create woodlands that can contribute more to landscape character, biodiversity enhancement, the retention of local habitats, promotion of native species as well as further protection of water resources and the archaeological heritage.

"It supports the quality of rural life by providing employment and amenities and it ensures a sustainable and commercial supply of timber," says the deputy who emphasises the important contribution forestry makes to combating climate change.

"Taking up FEPS will allow farmers to produce a commercial crop of timber while making an enhanced contribution to the environment, and grant assistance is available towards costs incurred in the setting up of a plantation," he says. Full details of the terms and conditions of the FEPS scheme, including an application form, are available on the Forest Service section of the Department of Agriculture's website at www.agriculture.gov.ie

No regional power

THE government's failure to use its shareholding to compel Aer Lingus to restore the Shannon-Heathrow service is an insult to the entire Mid West region, according to Corbally man, Des Long, chairman of the Munster executive of Republican Sinn Féin.

"Crocodile tears, lip service and Pontius Pilate fingers are the only response from the ruling party politicians in Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Kerry who are taking refuge from the wrath of the people in meaningless words and futile gestures," he said.

Asserting that some responsibility for the decision must be taken by the 26 county administration politicians, Mr Long said that the sad reality of the situation is that decisions made in Leinster House bear no relation to the interests of the ordinary people of the Mid West.

"There's no regional power structure, no concept of the politicians being accountable to the people - the only way forward for a true democracy is that power be rooted in the people in all of Ireland," he said.

Home debut

ON view throughout the month of September in the Library in Sixmilebridge will be a major exhibition celebrating the life and many groundbreaking achievements of the man whose name is synonymous with Shannon Airport, Dr Brendan O'Regan, noted peace ambassador and initiator of commercial and industrial initiatives.

Empowering the People - the Career and Achievements of Dr O'Regan moves from the Shannon based Sean Lemass Library where it has previously been on view to Sixmilebridge where Dr O'Regan was born in 1917.

City's sailing hero honoured by mayor

by Marie Hobbins

LIMERICK'S first citizen, Mayor Ger Fahy, has paid a special honour to one of the city's outstanding sportsmen, Ger O'Rourke, who recently became the first Irishman to win the prestigious Rolex Fastnet Yacht Race on his 50 foot yacht, Chieftain.

The Limerick property developer with close family members and friends, were guests of honour at a special mayoral reception, hosted by the mayor in City Hall and heard Mayor Fahy acknowledge him as "epitomising Limerick's strong sporting tradition when he finished this tough, world class race in just 55 hours."

"Ger has excelled locally, nationally and now internationally in this world class race and we in Limerick are extremely proud of him, not only for winning the Rolex Fastnet Yacht Race but also for his other recent sailing successes."

Mayor Fahy also reminded the attendance that it had been the managing director of the Chieftain Construction Company's first time competing in the 608-mile race from Southampton to the Fastnet Rock and back again to Plymouth.

"He won it first time round with his 12-person crew, which included his 18-year-old daughter, Deirdre and fellow Limerick man, Edwin O'Connor."

The victorious sailor revealed that he had first taken up sailing some 20 years ago when he was "looking for a bit of adventure."

As a member of the Kilrush based Western Yacht Club he rapidly progressed from cruising down the South West coast of Ireland to winning some of the top races in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

His other recent achievements include:

2007: Cork Dry Gin Sailor of the Year

2006: Winner of the 2006 Round Ireland Race

2006: Overall Winner in the Round Britain and Ireland Race

2006/2005: Won his class in the Sydney to Hobart Race.

Replying to the mayor's comments, Mr O'Rourke said he was absolutely delighted to have won the Rolex Fastnet Yacht Race.

"There were two world class races that I always wanted to win - the Sydney to Hobart Race and the Rolex Fastnet Yacht Race. Most people only dream of winning one of these races in a lifetime."

"We did back-to-back on the Chieftain with a mostly amateur

crew and were up against highly professional crews and expensive boats, but thankfully we did it - I'm delighted with the win which is good for Limerick and good for sailing," he said.

Also attending the reception were Edwin O'Connor's father, Raymond

and a number of Ger O'Rourke's friends and fellow sailors, including, Bobby Mulrooney, Frank Larkin and Charlie McDonald.

A second civic reception will be hosted by Limerick County Council for Mr O'Rourke in County Hall on Monday, September 24.

Ger O'Rourke and Mayor Ger Fahy at City Hall to mark the victory of yacht Chieftain in the Rolex Fastnet Yacht Race '07.



Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan at UL

POLICE ombudsman for Northern Ireland, Nuala O'Loan, will speak about her experiences as head of one of the most controversial offices in the Northern Ireland administration when she visits UL on Monday, September 10.

Her address will be followed by a reception and tickets at 10 euro are available from www.irishpeaceinstitute.org

Mr O'Loan, who with members of her family, were victims of violence in the North of Ireland, was appointed police ombudsman during the transition of the Police Force there, from the former RUC regime to the current PSNI.

Under her stewardship, her office has carried out a number of high profile investigations, the results of which have been far reaching and which have drawn condemnation and admiration alike from all sides of the community in the North.

Last January, she completed a major report into collusion by the former RUC with Loyalist paramilitaries in 16 murders carried out by the UVF. Her report found that leading UVF members were paid and shielded from prosecution by members of the RUC Special Branch.

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The implications of that hard hitting report were wide reaching and lead to calls for the resignation of the former head of the RUC Sir Ronnie Flanagan. Mr. Flanagan denied any knowledge of the activities of some members of his force.

Her office recently began a new investigation into the police handling of a so called shoot to kill case, in which three IRA members were shot dead in Lurgan in 1982

The difficult and courageous work of her office has brought her into conflict with many sides in the North but nevertheless, is seen by the governments of both the UK and the Republic of Ireland as vital in building trust and restoring integrity in a newly formed and more broadly represented PSNI.

In addition to her high profile work as Police Ombudsman in the North, Mrs O'Loan is also a qualified solicitor and was the senior lecturer holding the Jean Monnet Chair in European Law at the University of Ulster.